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Spinoza: The Velocities of Thought

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INITIAL TRANSCRIPTION BY WEB DELEUZE
AUGMENTED TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION
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... which I had sketched out and which was this sort of problem: this problem of the velocities of thought and the importance of these speeds in Spinoza, from the point of view of Spinoza himself. And I was saying that, after all, intellectual intuition -- what Spinoza will present as the intuition of the third kind of knowledge -- is kind of a lightning thought (*pensée comme éclair*). It's indeed a thinking at absolute speed, that is, that goes simultaneously to the deepest level and that embraces, that possesses a maximum amplitude proceeding like a bolt of lightning. There is quite a good book by Romain Rolland called *L'éclair de Spinoza* [Spinoza's Lightning Bolt], very well written.

Now I was saying, when you read or reread the *Ethics*, you must be sensitive or at least think about this question that I only ask, namely that it indeed seems to me, as I said the last time, that book V proceeds differently. That is, it seems to me that, in the last book of the *Ethics*, and especially from a certain moment onward, [as] Spinoza himself signals, the moment when he claims to enter the third kind of knowledge, the proofs no longer have the same scheme as in the other books because in the other books, the proofs were developed under the second order of knowledge. But when he moves into the third genre or into an exposition according to the third kind of knowledge, the demonstrative mode changes, the proofs undergo contractions. There are all kinds, there are areas of proof which, in my opinion, have disappeared. Everything is contracted. Everything is going at full speed. Well, it is possible. But that's only a difference in speed between Book V and the others, the absolute speed of the third kind [of knowledge], that is, of the book V, in contrast to the relative speeds of the first four books.

I was also saying something else the last time: if I focus on the area of relative speeds of thought, a thought that goes more or less quickly, I must explain -- you understand this problem. I insist that it's a kind of practical problem -- I do not mean to say that one should hardly think about this. Of course, thinking is something that takes an extraordinary amount of time. It takes a lot of time. I am talking about the speeds and slowness produced by thought, just as a body has effects of speed and slowness depending on the movements it undertakes. And there are times when it's good for the body to be slow. There are even times when it is good for the body to be still. It's not about relations of value. And maybe absolute speed is

¹ Despite the session starting in mid-sentence, this is the first complete session transcript and translation for this Seminar on Spinoza. However, see note 5 regarding internal references to previous session for which we have no recordings.



absolute immobility, that they merge absolutely. If it is true that Spinoza's philosophy proceeds as and through spreading over a kind of fixed plane, if there is indeed this kind of Spinozist fixed plane where all his philosophy is inscribed, it is obvious that, at the limit, absolute immobility and absolute speed simply become one. But, in the domain of the relative within the first four books, it is sometimes necessary for thought to produce slowness, the slowness of its own development, and it is sometimes necessary for it to go faster, the relative speed of its development relative to one concept or another, to one topic or another. [Pause]

And I was saying that, if you look at the whole of the first four books, then it seems again, I am making, I was making another hypothesis on which I do not want to dwell too much, which is that, in the *Ethics*, there is this unusual thing that Spinoza calls "scolies", alongside and in addition to the propositions, proofs, corollaries. He writes scolies, that is, kinds of additions to the proofs. And I was saying, if you even read them out loud -- there's no reason to treat a philosopher worse than you treat a poet -- if you read it out loud, you will be immediately sensitive to this: that the scolies do not have the same tone, do not have the same timbre as the aggregate of propositions and proofs, and that the timbre becomes, how would I say, a kind of pathos, passion. And [I was saying] that Spinoza reveals therein kinds of aggressivity, of violence to which such a sober, so wise, so reserved a philosopher had not necessarily accustomed us. And there is a speed of the scolies which is really a speed of affect in contrast to the relative slowness of the proofs which is a slowness of the concept as if, within the scolies, affects were projected, whereas in the proofs, concepts are developed.

So this practical, passionate tone -- perhaps one of the secrets of the *Ethics* is in the scolies - I was opposing at that point a kind of continuous chain of propositions and proofs, a continuity which is that of the concept, to the discontinuity of the scolies which operates as a kind of broken line and which is the discontinuity of affects. Fine, so let's assume... All of that, it's for you to... These are impressions gleaned from reading. Understand that if I insist on this, it may be that the form after all is so adequate to the very content of philosophy that the way in which Spinoza proceeds formally already has something to tell us about the concepts of Spinozism.

And finally, I was still making a final remark within this order of relative speeds and slownesses. It's that if I only take the order of the proofs in their progressive development, the order of the proofs, there is not a uniform relative speed. Sometimes it stretches and it develops; sometimes it contracts, and it envelops itself more or less. So, there is, in the succession of proofs of the first four books, not only the great difference in rhythm between the proofs and the scolies, but differences in rhythm in the course of successive proofs. They don't go at the same pace. And there, I would then like to find fully -- and it's in this way that these are not merely formal remarks- - to find fully, to complete these remarks on speed, to find fully the problem of ... well, almost the problem of ontology. In what form?

I am taking the start of the *Ethics*. How can we start into an ontology? In an ontology, from the point of view of immanence where, literally, Being is everywhere, wherever there is Being, the existents, the be-ings [*étants*], are within Being, which is what seemed to us to define ontology in our previous meetings. Where and how can we start? This [is] the problem of the beginning of philosophy which has dragged on throughout the history of philosophy and which seems to have received very different answers: What to start with? In a way, here as elsewhere, following the ready-made idea where we say that philosophers do not agree with each other, each philosopher seems to have his answer. It is obvious that Hegel has a certain idea of where and how to start in philosophy, Kant has another, Feuerbach has another and takes Hegel to task about it.

Well, if we apply this problem to Spinoza, how does he start? Where does he start? We would seem to have an answer imposed on us. In an ontology, one can only start with Being.



[Pause] Yes maybe. And yet ... And yet, Spinoza, the fact is, he does not start with Being. This becomes important for us; it will be a problem. How is it that in a pure ontology, in a radical ontology, one does not start where we'd have expected the beginning to be occur, namely with Being as (*en tant que*) Being?

We have seen that Spinoza determines Being as Being as an absolutely infinite substance and that is what he calls God. Now, the fact is that Spinoza does not start with absolutely infinite substance; he does not start with God. And yet, it's like a ready-made proverb, eh, to say that Spinoza begins with God. There is even a ready-made expression to distinguish Descartes and Spinoza: "Descartes begins with the self, Spinoza begins with God." Well, it's not true. It's not true. At least this is only true of one of Spinoza's books, and it is a book which, literally, is not his. Indeed, in his youth, Spinoza was already doing, according to the method that I described to you -- the method of study groups (*collegiants*) -- he taught some kind of private lessons to different groups. And we possess these courses. We possess them in the form of notes from participants. We can't exclude the possibility that Spinoza wrote some of these notes, some very obscure. Studying the manuscript is very, very complicated and has an entire history. In the end, all of these notes exist under the title of *The Short Treatise (Le Court Traité)*. *The Short Treatise*. And, in *The Short Treatise*, chapter One is thus titled: "That God is". I can say, literally, that *The Short Treatise* begins with God. But afterwards, not at all; afterwards, not at all.

And there that poses a problem because it is very often said that the *Ethics* begins with God and indeed, "Book I" is titled "De Deo", of God, about God. But if you look in detail -- all of these being prompts for you to pay close attention to the letter of the text -- if you look in detail, you will see that God in Book I, at the level of definitions, is only reached in definition Six -- so five preceding definitions were needed -- and at the proof level, [God] is only reached around Nine, Ten, propositions Nine and Ten. So five prior definitions were required and eight prior propositions / proofs were required. I can conclude that, by and large, the *Ethics* begins with God, [but] literally, literally, it does not start with God. And indeed, where does it start? It begins with the status of the constituent elements of the substance, namely, the attributes.

But even better, before the *Ethics*, Spinoza wrote a book, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. In this treatise, - this treatise, he did not complete it, for mysterious reasons which we will be able to discuss later, but anyway, it does not matter, he did not complete it. Now I am reading this because I attach great importance to it, you will see, because I would like to raise certain translation problems very quickly.

Paragraph 46: [Pause] I am reading the translation -- the best translation of the *Treaty on the Emendation* is the translation by [Alexandre] Koyré in Éditions Vrin, but those who have the Pleiade, you are fine with what you find, it does not matter. Paragraph 46 -- in all editions, the numbering of the paragraphs is the same -- "If anyone asks why I have not at the starting-point set forth all the truths of nature in their due order, inasmuch as truth is self-evident, I reply" - and here, there's a series of three small points indicating a lacuna -- [Deleuze rereads the citation up to this point] "I reply by warning him not to reject as false any paradoxes he may find here."

Understand, I am saying: it's still funny: the editors are not embarrassed, and they are right not to be embarrassed: when something does not suit them, they throw in a lacuna. [Laughter] There is the indication of a lacuna which is not at all in the manuscript, and it's very weird! Do you grasp what I mean? Suppose an editor who is convinced that Spinoza, even nervously persuaded, that Spinoza "must" begin with Being, that is, with absolutely infinite substance, that is, with God, he encounters texts where Spinoza says, on the contrary, that he's not going to start with God, at that point, the editor is faced with several possibilities:



either to say that this is a moment in Spinoza's thought that has not yet reached maturity, that is, to say that Spinoza has not reached his true thought; or to presume that there's a gap in the text that would change the meaning of the sentence; or else, a third possibility -- in a sense, it is the best -- barely tampering with the translation.

In this text 46 - and I would just like to expand on this point because it is part of the internal criticism of the texts -- in this paragraph 46, Spinoza tells us formally: there is indeed a due order that is the order that begins with God, but I cannot follow it from the start. It is a clear thought: there is due order, in necessary order; it is that which goes from the substance to the modes; it is that which goes from God to the things, but this necessary order I cannot follow it from the beginning. This is a very clear thought! We are so persuaded that Spinoza must follow it from the start that when we find a text that does not correspond to this, one assumes there's a gap; this isn't right, this just can't be right!

Paragraph 49, I am reading -- and there the editors didn't dare to correct it -- I am reading: "From the beginning, therefore" -- end of paragraph 49 -- "from the beginning, therefore, we will principally have to see to it that we arrive as quickly as possible" -- *quanto ocius* -- "that we arrive as quickly as possible at the knowledge of the Being."² So here, my heart throbs with joy, you understand. He says it formally. It is a matter of arriving as quickly as possible, as quickly as possible, at the position of the Being and at the knowledge of the Being. But not from the start. The ontology will have a beginning: as the Being is everywhere, the ontology precisely has to have a distinct start from the Being itself. As a result, you understand, this becomes a technical problem for me because this beginning cannot be anything more than Being, superior to Being. There isn't any. The great One superior to Being does not exist from the point of an ontology; we saw this at our other sessions.

What is this mysterious beginning going to be? I continue my review of the treatise. Paragraph 49... No, I just did that. Paragraph 75... No, there's nothing. Ah yes! "For us, on the contrary, if we proceed as little abstractly as possible and if we start as early as possible" - in Latin, as early as might occur, *quam primum fieri potest*, as early as might occur -- "if we start as early as possible from the first elements"-- from the first elements -- "i.e. with the source and the origin of nature." See! We start with the first elements, that is, with the source and origin of nature, the absolutely infinite substance with all attributes, but we only start there "as soon as possible". Fine... There are indeed... We will get there as quickly as possible. It's the order of relative speed.³

And finally, because it's the most beautiful case, paragraph 99, in which the translation is tampered with, which, it seems to me, is the worst! This is what the text translated by [Roland] Caillois says and the translators there follow Caillois. I am quoting Caillois because he was a very prodigious man of immense knowledge. I am reading Caillois's translation: "In order that all our perceptions be ordered and unified, it is necessary that as quickly as might be possible" -- we find it again -- "we must act as quickly as might be possible," and Caillois translates: "[hyphen] - reason requires it [hyphen] -" we were looking for "if there is a Being, and also what it is". See the translation that Caillois provides: "it is necessary that as quickly as might

² The corresponding Gutenberg Project text reads somewhat differently: "This is an observation which should be made at the outset, in order that we may arrive at the knowledge of such a being more quickly."

³ Again, the Gutenberg Project text from paragraph 75 varies significantly from this, omitting Deleuze's key phrase: "However, if we proceed with as little abstraction as possible, and begin from primary elements -- that is, from the source and origin of nature." Deleuze seems to attribute this phrase, "as quickly as possible" to paragraph 75, whereas it's located in paragraph 49.



be possible -- reason requires it" -- we are looking for "if there is a Being"; in other words, [Caillois] situates "reason requires it" onto the necessity for discovering if there is a Being.⁴

This is strange for a man who knew Latin admirably since the text doesn't say that at all. I am translating the text into bad French, but word for word: "It is necessary, it is required (*requis*) that as fast as possible and as reason requires it". See, this is not such a big thing, but it is enormous; this changes everything. In Latin: *quam primum fieri potest et ratio postulat*, as fast as possible and as reason requires it. In other words, it is reason which requires that we not start with Being but that we get there as quickly as possible.

And why does that matter to me? It's because of this question of agreement. There is a relative speed. "As fast as possible" is the first ten proofs of the Ethics, from book I. He goes as fast as possible. That's the relative speed of thought. Reason demands that there be a rhythm of thought. You will not start with Being; you will start with what gives you access to Being. But what can give me access to Being? So, it's something that "is not ". It is not the One. We saw that it could not be the One. What is it? This is a problem. This is a problem. I would venture my conclusion: if it is true that Spinoza is a philosopher for whom thought is so productive of speeds and slownesses, [then it] is itself caught in a system of speeds and slownesses. This is strange. Again, it goes much further than to tell ourselves, "Thought takes time." Thought takes time. Descartes might have said it, as I pointed out the last time. Descartes might have said it. But thought produces speeds and slownesses and is itself inseparable from the speeds and slownesses it produces. There is a speed of the concept, there is a slowness of the concept. What is that? Well, fine. What do we usually call "fast" or "slow"?

What I'm saying there is very loose (*libre*). This is to make you want to go read this author. I don't know if I'm succeeding; maybe the result will be the opposite. So I'll not make another word by word commentary. I sometimes do that, like as I just did but, [*Pause*] you understand me.

What do we usually refer to in saying about something, "It's going fast, it's not fast", "It's slowing down, it's rushing, it's speeding up"? We say that about bodies. We say that about bodies. And I already told you -- with the condition that I only comment on it later -- that Spinoza has a very extraordinary conception of bodies, that is, a truly kinetic (*cinétique*) conception. Indeed, he defines the body, each body, and much more. He makes the individuality of the body depend on it. The individuality of the body for him, of each body, is a relationship of speeds and slownesses between elements, and I have emphasized, between unformed elements. Why? Since the individuality of a body is its form, and if he tells us the form of the body -- he will himself use the word "form" in this sense -- the form of the body, it is a relation of speeds and slownesses between its elements. The elements must have no form, otherwise the definition would make no sense. So, this has to be unformed material elements, that have no form by themselves. It will be their relation of speeds or slownesses that will constitute the form of the body. But, in themselves, these elements between which the relationships of speeds and slownesses are established are formless, unformed, unformed and informal. What I mean here, I will consider later. But for him, that's what a body is.

And I was saying to you a table, [*Deleuze smacks the desk*] well, that's what it is. Fine, think of physics. Physics will talk to us [of] a system of molecules moving in relation to each other,

⁴ The transcriber (unattributed) for this first part has rendered the translator's name cited by Deleuze in the manner that he pronounced it on the recording, Coilleret or Colleret. However, the only translator of Spinoza that one can find is one of the three who translated for Gallimard's Pléiade edition of Spinoza's *Oeuvres complètes*, Roland Caillois, with Madeleine Frances and Robert Misrahi. We have replaced the name chosen by the transcriber with the name that corresponds to the translator on record for an edition consulted frequently by Deleuze.



a system of atoms. This is Eddington's office, the physicist's office. Fine. And [Spinoza] has this vision. Again, it is not at all that he anticipates atomic or electronic physics. That's not it. That's not it. It's this: as a philosopher, he has a concept of the body of the kind that philosophy produced at that era, a determination of the body that physics with entirely different means will discover or produce on its own account. These things happen all the time.

And so, it's very odd, because it makes me think of some of Spinoza's particularly beautiful texts. You will find, for example, you will find at the beginning of book III of the *Ethics*, [where] Spinoza really proposes some things that look like... [*Deleuze does not finish this*] Last year I tried to discover or indicate -- not discover, I did not discover -- certain relations between a philosopher's concepts and kinds of cries -- basic cries, kinds of cries, kinds of cries in thought. And well, that's how it is from time to time, there are cries emerging from Spinoza. This is all the more interesting since, yet again, this philosopher is one who exudes an image of serenity, so it's odd.

When does he start crying out? He cries out a lot precisely in the scolies, or else in the introductions to a book. He does not shout in the proofs. A proof is not a place or a site where you can cry out. And what are Spinoza's screams? I'll quote one. He says -- he's talking about the little baby, the sleepwalker, and the drunkard -- 'There we are, there we are. Ah! The little baby, the sleepwalker, the little baby on all fours, the sleepwalker who gets up at night while sleeping and who's going to murder me, and then the drunkard who launches into a big speech. Fine. And [Spinoza] says -- sometimes he's very funny, you know, he has a Jewish humor, Spinoza -- he says: "Oh! In the end, we do not know what the body can do." We don't know what the body can do. So there, in your reading, when you come across this kind of sentence in Spinoza, you must not move on as if ... First, you have to laugh a lot; these are funny moments. There is no reason why philosophy should not have its very own comic. "We don't know what the body can do". See a baby there crawling; see an alcoholic talking to you who is completely drunk, and then you see a sleepwalker passing by there. Oh yes! It's true, we don't know "what the body can do."

After all, this is a rather special preparation for another cry that will reverberate long afterward and that will be similar but more contracted when Nietzsche exclaims, "How astonishing the body is." Which means what? This is a reaction to certain philosophers who say: listen, just drop the soul, consciousness, etc. Instead, you should first try to see "what the body can do". What is... You don't even know what the body is and here you come talking to us about the soul. Well, no, you just need to move on.

Fine, what does he mean here? How astonishing the body is, the other [Nietzsche] will say. And Spinoza already says, literally, "You don't yet know what the body can do." They certainly have some idea if they are saying that. It's odd, they are proposing to us a "model" of the body; obviously, it's quite mean for the other philosophers who still have not stopped talking about consciousness and the soul. They are saying, and after that -- when they treat Spinoza as being materialist, saying, "that's just materialism!" -- of course, this isn't literal; he also never stops talking about the soul, but how does he speak about the soul? He speaks about it in a strange way, and it's quite comprehensible about the soul and its relations with the body; he has a doctrine that will be known by the name -- he didn't create the term -- that will be known by the name of parallelism. And what is parallelism? I am saying that it's odd because this isn't his term, but comes from Leibniz who uses it in a completely different context, and yet this term suits Spinoza quite well.

An audio [clip](#) of this lecture, with English subtitles, from "[Philosophy Overdose](#)."
A second follows below.

[Start of First Audio Clip]



Let's get back to his basic ontological proposition, his basic ontological proposition, which finally is Being -- it includes several articulations. First of all, "Being is substance, but absolutely infinite substance, having, possessing" -- there I leave a word very vague -- "all the attributes," absolute substance possessing all the infinite attributes. For reasons that we will see later, it turns out that "we", who are not absolute substance, we only know two attributes; our knowledge is only of two attributes: extension and thought, and in fact, these are attributes of God. There are many "whys" in all this, but this isn't what I am dealing with at the moment; we will see it later. Why are extension and thought attributes of God? I am mentioning it to you in passing, but it's not what I'm dealing with today. That doesn't prevent absolute substance from having an infinity of attributes; it doesn't have merely two. We only know two of them, but it has an infinity.

What are we? We are not substance. Why? Here we'll completely fall right back into a problem that I already tried to raise the last time, in the previous classes.⁵ If we also were substance, substance would be understood in at least two senses; it would be understood in several senses. It would be understood in a first sense: God, the infinite substance. It would be understood in a second sense: Me, finite being. In fact, in the first sense, God, the substance, this would be something like that which exists through itself. But if I were a substance, it would be in a very different sense since I do not exist through myself, being a finite creature, being a finite being. I exist, let us assume, through God. I do not exist through myself. Thus, I am not substance in the same sense as God is substance.

Third sense: if my body itself is "substance", it's in yet another sense since the body is divisible, whereas the soul is not supposed to be so, etc. In other words, understand: if I am substance, it's quite simple. I am only substance in one sense of the word "substance", and henceforth, the word "substance" has several senses. In other words, the word "substance" is "equivocal". It's necessarily equivocal. "Substance" will be stated by analogy. If you recall the notions that I vaguely tried to define at the other meetings, "substance" will be stated by analogy since analogy is the status of the concept insofar as it has several senses: this is equivocity. "Substance" will be an equivocal term, having several senses. These senses will have relations by analogy. "Just as God only needs the self to exist", first sense of substance, "me, finite being, I only need God in order to exist," second sense. There is analogy between the meanings, and at that point, "substance" is an equivocal term.

See, in fact, Descartes says it explicitly. Descartes remains at least a Thomist despite Descartes's ruptures with St. Thomas [Aquinas]. He absolutely remains a Thomist on a fundamental point, to wit: Being is not univocal. In other words, there are several senses of the term "substance," and as Descartes says, here employing vocabulary from the Middle Ages, substance is expressed through analogy. Notice what these mysterious terms mean, in fact; they mean something quite rigorous.

We've seen this, so I won't go back over it; we've seen that, on the contrary, Spinoza develops, deploys the fixed plane of the univocity of Being, univocal Being. If Being is substance, it is absolutely infinite substance, and there is nothing other than this substance. This substance is the only one, in other words, the univocity of substance, no other substances than absolutely infinite Being, that is, no other substance than Being insofar as it is Being. Being insofar as it is Being is substance. That immediately implies that nothing else may be substance. Nothing else? What else is there than Being? We've seen this at the previous

⁵ This reference to previous sessions obviously suggests that at least two meetings took place before the 2 December 1980 session, one for which we have at least a partial transcript (25 November), the other for which neither a recording nor a transcript exist in the archives.



meetings, and this is perhaps the departure point for the ontology we were looking for. So, maybe we are going to have a possible answer to our question!

What else is there than Being, than Being insofar as it is Being, from the viewpoint of ontology itself? We have seen this from the start: what there is other than Being insofar as it is Being, from the viewpoint of ontology itself, is what Being is expressed of, that is, be-ing (*l'étant*), the existent. Being is expressed of what "is", of be-ing, of the existent. Notice the immediate consequence, what is: be-ing is not substance. Obviously, this is scandalous, scandalous, from a certain viewpoint, scandalous for Descartes, for all of Christian thought, for the entire thought of creation. That which is, is not substance.

So what is it? We no longer even have any choice! What "is" is neither substance, nor attribute since substance is Being. Attributes are the elements of Being. All the attributes are equal; there's no superiority from one attribute to another. And, in fact, you indeed notice that Spinoza fully deepens his opposition to an entire philosophical tradition, the tradition of the One superior to Being. What he is going to create is philosophy. I believe that it's almost a Spinozan characteristic, the most anti-hierarchical philosophy that has ever been created. There are few philosophers who, one way or another, either explicitly state or even suggest, at least in general explicitly state, that the soul had greater value than the body, that thought had greater value than extension, and all that, belonging to levels of Being starting from the One. This is inseparable; the hierarchical difference is inseparable from theories or conceptions of emanation, of the emanative cause. I reminded you [that] effects emerge from the cause; there's a hierarchical order from cause to effect: the One is superior to Being; Being, in its turn, is superior to the soul; the soul is superior to the body. This is a descending slope.

The world of Spinoza is very odd, indeed. It is truly the most anti-hierarchical world that philosophy has ever produced! In fact, if there is a univocity of being; if it is the One which depends on Being and not Being which depends on the One, which results from Being; if there is only Being and that which is expressed of Being, and if that which is expressed of Being is in being; if Being encompasses that which is expressed of [Being], containing it from the point of view of immanence, in a certain way that we will have to determine, [then] all beings are equal. I simply leave a blank space: all beings are equal, as what? From what point of view? As what? So, what does that mean, a stone and a sage, a pig and a philosopher, all are of equal value? It's enough to state "as what". Of course, they're of equal value. As existence, they're of equal value; they're equal. And here, Spinoza will never give up on that. He will say it formally, the wise man and the madman, there is indeed a point of view, an "insofar as", in which one sees quite evidently that one is not superior to the other. That aspect is very odd, very astonishing! I'll try to explain it, but I don't pretend to explain it yet, right?!

So fine, Being, unequivocal Being, is necessarily an equal Being. It's not necessarily that all be-ings (*étants*) are equal, but that Being, Being is stated equally of all be-ings; Being is expressed equally of all that is, whether a blood clot or a philosopher, eh! In any case, Being has only one meaning. A great idea, right?! But just having the idea is not enough. One must build the landscape in which the idea works, and he knows how to do it, Spinoza! And univocal Being is necessarily a lost being. Never has anyone advanced farther the criticism of all hierarchy. Extension is like thought; it is an attribute of substance, and you cannot say that one attribute is greater than the other: perfect equality of all attributes.

So, simply put, if there is perfect equality, what must be done? What does parallelism mean? We are modes, right? We are modes; we aren't substances, that is, we are manners of being, we are modes, which means manners of being. We are manners of being, we are modes. In other words, what is Being expressed of? It is expressed of the be-ing, but what is the be-ing? The be-ing is the manner of being. You are manners of being, that's what it is! You aren't persons; you are manners of being, you are modes. Does that mean, as Leibniz pretended to



believe, as many commentators have said, that in the end, Spinoza didn't believe in individuality? On the contrary, I believe that there are few authors who have so greatly believed in and grasped individuality, but we have the individuality of a manner of being. And you are worth what your manner of being is worth. Oh! All that is really funny!

So, am I a manner of being? Yes indeed, I am a manner of being. That means a manner of being, a mode of being. A manner of being is a mode of being. I am not a substance. You understand, a substance is a person. Well no, I am not a substance. I am a manner of being. Maybe this is a lot better! We don't know! So, necessarily, I am a being since I am a manner of being. Necessarily, there is immanence, there's the immanence of all manners of being. [Spinoza] is in the process of creating a thought, but we realize at once, well obviously, finally we realize, if that appeals to you, you realize, quite obviously, he's right, but this story is completely twisted. It's quite astounding! He's introducing a completely strange aspect of this! Try for a moment to think of yourself in that way! You have to repeat it over and over: No, no, I'm not a substance; I'm a manner of being. Eh? Yeah, so fine! A manner of what? Well yeh, a manner of being. Huh! So, does a manner of being endure, having a personality, an individuality? Maybe it has no personality, but a manner of being has a very strong individuality, a manner of being.

So, what does that involve? Well, that means that I am within. What am I within? I am within the Being of which I am a manner. And someone else? Someone else too, is within the Being of which he/she is a manner. But then, if we get in a fight, are these two manners of being that are fighting? Yes, these are two manners of being that are fighting. Why? No doubt they are not compatible. Why? Maybe there is an incompatibility of speeds and slownesses. Huh! Why am I bringing back speeds and slownesses? Because manners of being or a manner of being, a mode of being, that's what it is! That's what it is! It's a relation of speed and slowness; these are relations of speed and slowness on the fixed plane of absolutely infinite substance.

Okay, well fine, if that's a manner of being, okay; we're going forward a little bit here -- and I'm nothing else! I'm a relation of speed and slowness between the molecules that compose me. What a world! One must think that obviously, every believer, every Christian, jolted upright when he read Spinoza; he said, but what is that? Even every Jew, I don't know ... Any man of religion. [Spinoza] kept going on, without any worries. He kept going on.

So then, what manner of being am I, what way of being, if I am a manner of being? We will say, it is not complicated! So there, you understand, I have a body and a soul; there he seems to say, he seems to fall back as well, stepping on everyone. I have a body and a soul. Finally, we'll discover, he is saying something like everyone else; this is not going to last long. He says: this is very true, I have a body and a soul, and I even only have that! And there, from one perspective, this is annoying. It's annoying since there's an infinity of attributes of absolute substance, and I simply have a body and a soul.

And in fact, what is it a body? A body is a mode of extension (*étendue*). A soul is a mode of thought. Maybe here, there is already an answer or an initial answer to the question: why, of all the attributes of absolute substance, am I familiar with only two of them? This is a fact. This is the fact of my limitation. This is how I am made. You will say to me: if you are made, you are a substance. No, I'm made as a manner. Well, I am made in the following way: Body and soul, that is, I am both a mode of extension through my body and a mode of thought through my soul. That is, my soul is a way of thought; my body is a manner of extending, of being extended.

So, in the attributes with which I'm not familiar, whose names I can't even say, since there's an infinity of them, there are other manners of being. There, there is the whole domain of a broad Spinozist science fiction: what happens in the other attributes that we do not know?



But fine, he's very discreet about it. He says, apart from that, one can't say anything. There is a fact of the limitation of knowledge. I only know two of its attributes, because I myself am a mode of extension and thought, period, that's all. But the attributes are strictly equal. This is how, you see, that hardly has he said -- like everyone else -- I have a body and a soul, than he's already said something different from everyone else: I am the double mode of the two attributes with which I'm familiar. I am a body, I am a soul, but all attributes are equal, no superiority of one attribute over another. So, you will never be able to say that my body is less than my soul, no. Moreover, it is strictly the same, it is the same manner of being. My body and soul are the same manner of being. Why?

There, I'm going too quickly, but I'll clarify. There, you can have in a flash the deepest vision of thought, one of the deepest thoughts of Spinoza, to wit: yes, how are my body and my soul distinguished? They are distinguished by the attribute they imply: the body is the mode of extension; the soul is the mode of thought. That's the distinction between soul and body. They are distinguished by the attribute they imply. These are two modes, two manners of being of different attributes, but the attributes are strictly equal. As a result, at the very moment when I say I have a soul and I have a body which are distinguished by the attribute to which they refer, I am also saying, I am one. Why am I one? Because I am one through the unique substance, since all the equal attributes are attributes of a single and same absolutely infinite substance.

So, I am two modes of two attributes: body, mode of extension; soul: mode of thought, but I am a single and same modification of substance. I am single and same modification of substance, which is expressed in two attributes, in the extended attribute as body, in the attribute thought as soul. I am two through the attributes that I implicate; I am one through the substance that envelops me. In other words, I am a modification of substance, insofar as it is expressed, that is, a manner of being, a manner of being of Being. I am a modification of substance, that is, a manner of being of Being insofar as this modification is expressed as body in the attribute extended and expressed as soul in the thought attribute, such that soul and body are the same thing. It's a single and same thing, not a substance; it is single and same manner or modification related to two distinct attributes which therefore appears as body and is body in the extended attribute and soul in the thought attribute. What a strange vision! So, that removes any possible privilege of the soul over the body, or vice versa.

And there, in a sense, it's the first time that we can understand how an ethics is not the same thing as a morality. It is not at all the same thing as a morality, necessarily so, for a very simple reason: there is something which belongs fundamentally to morality. It is the idea of an inverse reason, an inverse rule in the relation of soul and body, necessarily so, since morality is inseparable from a kind of hierarchy, if only the hierarchy of values. Something has to ... There is no morality if something is of no greater value than something else. There is no morality of "everything is of the same value"; there is no morality of "everything is equal". Strangely, I'd say, there is an ethics of "everything is equal". And there, we will see it well later. [Spinoza] says, there is no such thing as "everything is of the same value", of "everything is equal". A hierarchy of values is required for morality, and the simplest expression of the hierarchy of values is the kind of tension, of inversely proportional relation, namely, if it is the body that acts, it is the soul that suffers, and if the soul acts, it is the body that suffers. One acts on the other and one suffers when the other acts such that the wise man's effort is to have the body obey.

That goes so far that it is almost an axiom of all the moralities of the era, in the 17th century. For example, Descartes writes a big book called *Passions of the Soul*,⁶ and *Passions of the*

⁶ Deleuze employs the title *Le traité des passions* (*The Treatise on Passions*).



Soul begins with the following affirmation: when the body acts, it is the soul which has a passion, which suffers; when the soul acts, it is the body which has a passion, which suffers. You understand that at the point we've reached in Spinoza's point of view, this proposition is unintelligible. If I am a manner of being which is equally expressed as a manner of extension and as a manner of thought, that is, as body and as soul; either my body and my soul suffer equally or else they also act equally. Never has the fate of man been better welded to the body

[End of First Audio Clip]

If my body is fast, with any nuance of speed since it can be a purely interior speed, it can be ... It's a speed, we have seen, it's a molecular speed, it is a molecular velocity. If my body is fast, my soul is fast; if my body is slow, my soul is slow. And perhaps it's good: sometimes my soul is slow, sometimes fast, but in any case, one will go along with the other. My soul will not be fast or slow without my body being as fast or slow.

In other words, you always have both together! You can never play your soul off of your body and your body off of your soul! Never! Both are the same manner expressed in two attributes. Thus, just forget betting on one against the other! There's no point in trying! In the end, it will never work like that! So, I come back to this: where does this cry come from, "how astonishing the body is" which seems to contradict parallelism? You see why it's called parallelism! In fact, two modes of different attributes, a body of extension, a soul in thought, two bodies of the different attribute, the attributes are strictly independent and equal, therefore parallel, and this is the same modification which is expressed in one mode or the other.

Fine, so how can he tell us "how amazing the body is", which seems to construct a model of the body? "You don't even know what a body can do"! What can ... You don't even know that! We do not know! In fact, the prodigious things that a baby, an alcoholic or a sleepwalker can do when their reason is asleep, when their consciousness is asleep -- you don't even know what a body can do! That doesn't correspond to all that precedes! Yes, it does! That obviously corresponds quite well! [Spinoza] is telling us, you see, something very important. He is telling us: the body goes beyond the knowledge that you think you have of it. Your body goes infinitely beyond the knowledge that you think you have, obviously, since you do not even know that the body is only a manner of being of extension; that under the heading "manner of being of extension", it is made up of all kinds of relations of speeds and slownesses transformable into each other, and you know nothing about all that, we know nothing about all that at all, he says. Even today, we can say that we know nothing about all this.

We are making progress. It's odd, I am struck that contemporary biology develops so much within a certain Spinozism but that, we will see, we will see later. So then, so then, so then... He says: your body goes beyond the knowledge that you have of it, and in the same way -- that's what must be added -- and in the same way -- let's try, since there is the parallelism, since body and soul are the same thing, and well -- just as your soul infinitely goes beyond the knowledge that you have of it, all that is directed entirely against Descartes, of course. Just as with your body, you had to go through the body to understand what it will say, and thus, the statements "how amazing the body is that", "We don't even know what a body can do", you see; what he means fully is: just as your body goes beyond the knowledge that you have of it, your soul and your thought go beyond the knowledge that you have of them. As a result, what will be philosophy's task as ethics? It will be to reach this knowledge of the soul and this consciousness of the body -- No! Dammit! (*Non! Zut alors!*) -- this knowledge of the body and this consciousness of the soul that go beyond the so-called natural knowledge that we have of our body and the natural consciousness that we have of our soul. We will have to go all the way to discover this unconsciousness of thought and this unknown of the body, and the two are but one and the same. The unknown of the body ...

[End of cassette; interruption]



... And the unknown of the body and the unconsciousness of thought. You are a manner; you are a manner of being. That means, you are an aggregate of relations of speeds and slownesses between thinking molecules; you are an aggregate of relations of speeds and slownesses between extended molecules. And all this is the unknown of the body and it is the unconscious of thought. So, fine, how is [Spinoza] going to manage all this?

Hence, I can move on to a second problem. [*Pause*] Ah yes, because my second problem imposes itself; quite obviously, it is linked. But, after all, why does he call this [book] *Ethics* and not *Ontology*, his grand book? Why call it *Ethics* instead of calling it *Ontology*? He should have called it *Ontology*! No! He should have called it *Ethics*. He surely did well. He knew what he was doing, right? He had a reason for calling it *Ethics*. So, if you will, it's going to be the same problem. I will give you some relief; we'll reset to zero. We completed an entire segment during the previous two meetings, and here, we've just completed an entire first segment on ontology, moving to a second segment: why does Spinoza call this ontology the *Ethics*?

Fine, and here too you sense that we are going to fall right into the problem: is an ethics the same thing as a morality? Does this amount to the same thing? If it doesn't come down at least to the same thing, to some extent wouldn't the *Ethics* be the only way that ontology has something to tell us about how to live, how to act? Whereas morality isn't what this is. Perhaps morality still implies – but we'd have to see why – perhaps morality still implies the position of something superior to Being. Perhaps a morality is inseparable from the position of the One superior to Being, to the point that if one believes in or if one creates ontology, Being insofar as it is Being, or the One far from being superior to Being, [this] is, on the contrary, a derivative (*dérivé*) of Being. Only here, it can no longer have any morality. But in what way?

So here we are. I'd like to begin with a story that is not difficult, but I'd like to consider it quickly for itself. It seems to me, all the morality, all the morality of the 17th century – no, I would say of Plato in the 17th, what could have happened after? We will see all that. My expressions, you correct them by yourself. – For a long time, morality consisted, in a certain way, in telling us, what? In telling us, what? Well, evil is nothing! Evil is nothing. And why was that morality? First, we were not told: above all, do good. We were first told: evil is nothing. Strange! What is this optimism? Is this optimism? So, what then, what? It occurred that these philosophers have to be some kinds of blissful optimists to be saying: is evil nothing? What did they mean? There were all the misfortunes in the world. And then, these guys kept saying evil is nothing. So, I would like to reflect on this. You see, we are restarting from zero. What did they mean, all these people who were saying, "evil is nothing", since Socrates spent his time saying that?

So yes, misfortune existed. Evil always had two forms: misfortune and wickedness, the evil of the unfortunate and the evil of the wicked. And this was not lacking from the Greeks onward, the wicked and the unfortunate. And moreover, at first glance, what is the reason for there being evil? The reason there is evil at first glance is that the wicked and the unfortunate are not the same. Well, if the wicked and the unfortunate were the same, the evil would indeed be nothing; it would destroy itself. The scandal is that the wicked are not necessarily unfortunate, and the unfortunate are not necessarily wicked. It happens from time to time, but not often enough. [*Laughter*] In other words, if the wicked were unfortunate and the unfortunate wicked, evil would destroy itself; there would be auto-suppression of the evil. That's great.

There's an author who, late in life, considered this. He said: well no, you can't do anything else. The law of the world is that the wicked are happy insofar they're wicked and the unfortunate innocent. He said: that's what evil is. And he said, that's what evil is. And lost in this vision, where does he write? This is the Marquis de Sade, hence the two great titles, right, of de Sade's two great novels: *The Misfortunes of Virtue* and *The Prosperities of Vice*. There would



be no problem of evil if there was not an irreducibility between the wicked man who was happy by himself and the innocent man who was by himself unhappy. For it's her virtue that keeps making Juliette -- is Juliette the nice one? [*Students whisper "yes"*] -- that keeps making Juliette unhappy. -- It's Justine? No, she's wicked, Justine. So, fine.

It is no coincidence that Socrates himself already, in the Platonic dialogues, never ceases to introduce a series of propositions which, at first sight, seem feeble to us and which consist in saying: basically, the wicked man is basically unhappy and the virtuous man is basically happy. Of course, it doesn't show, it doesn't show; it doesn't show, but he says: "I will prove it to you ". He's going to prove it. I emphasize why I am making this long and also somewhat feeble parenthesis: it is to have you sense that, in a certain way, one should not assume people are morons -- that would be my plea -- and when very serious philosophers say, "Evil is nothing, only the wicked man is unhappy", they may have a very bizarre idea in mind and such an idea that they are delighted if they are told: "but you're a dreamer!" Maybe we are wrong about what they're up to. Perhaps at the very moment when they are saying that, they are very singularly diabolical because you can't think that Socrates believes in his thing. That's not what he believes in. He does not believe that the wicked are unhappy insofar as they are wicked. He knows that it doesn't happen like that.

So, my question is -- that's why I am saying let's not take Socrates for an idiot -- we're going to ask: but why does he tell us that? What is he up to in order to tell us that, when obviously that's not how things are? One must not imagine Socrates so lost in ideas and in the clouds that he believes that the wicked are unhappy. The Greek city abounds with very happy villains. So, does he mean they will be punished afterwards? Yes, he says it like that. He says it splendidly; this is how he even invents myths. But no, no, no, that's not it. What does he want? What is he looking for? Do you already sense it?

He projects a kind of cry: "So, evil is nothing". But he throws out a kind of provocation in a way that the fate of philosophy is at stake within this. Literally, I would say: they're playing the fool, playing the fool. Playing the fool has always been a function of philosophy. The fool, in what sense? In a sense that really comes from the Middle Ages, when the theme of the idiot is constant, for the Russians, I mean, for Dostoyevsky, for a successor of Dostoyevsky who died not too long ago, namely [Léon] Chestov. However, this doesn't form a tradition; Chestov doesn't recognize himself in Descartes.

But I am trying to trace this tradition very quickly; I am not tracking it from the beginning. -- Here, if someone had ideas on this, it would be very good, even randomly within the readings. Research surely has been done on this, but I have not had the time. -- I randomly refer to Nicholas of Cusa, a very, very important philosopher; he was also Cardinal. Nicholas of Cusa is a very, very important man of the Renaissance, a very great philosopher. Cardinal of Cusa introduces the subject of the idiot, and in what sense? It has a very simple meaning: It is the idea that the philosopher is the one who has no knowledge at hand and who has only one faculty, natural reason. The idiot is the man of natural reason. He possesses nothing but a kind of natural reason, natural light, you see, as opposed to the light of knowledge and also as opposed to the revealed light. The idiot is the man of natural light. So, it starts by being Nicholas of Cusa.

Descartes will write a little text which is, in fact, hardly known, but that is in the complete works, in which contains the idiot in its title and which is an exposition of the cogito. And in fact, when Descartes introduces his great statement, "I think therefore I am", what is the idiot's statement? It is presented by Descartes as the idiot's statement because this is the man reduced to natural reason. And in fact, what does Descartes tell us literally? He tells us: "I cannot even say man is a reasonable animal." He says this verbatim; I'm not interpreting. He tells us: "I cannot even say man is a reasonable animal, as Aristotle said, because to be able to say 'man



is a reasonable animal', we would first have to know what 'animal' means and what 'reasonable' means. In other words, the phrase 'reasonable animal' has explicit assumptions that must be clarified. And I am incapable of doing it."

And Descartes adds: "I say, I think therefore I am." Ah, well? The opponent would be quite ready to say: "well say, you don't have any problem with that, do you, because when you say 'I think therefore I am', you have to know what it means to think, what it means to be". I think; I am. What does it mean: I. Here, Descartes becomes very, very odd, but these are the best pages of Descartes, it seems to me. He becomes very subtle because he says: "No, it's not the same at all, not at all the same." Here's why it's not the same: it's because, in the case of "reasonable animal", there are explicit presuppositions, namely, you aren't obliged to know what animal and reasonable mean, whereas when I say "I think therefore I am", Descartes claims, it is quite different. There are many presuppositions, but there they are implicit, namely, you cannot think without knowing what it means to think; you cannot "be" without at least confusedly knowing what it means to think; you cannot "be" without knowing at least confusedly what it means to be. You sense it from a feeling that would be the feeling of thought. In other words, "reasonable animal" refers to explicit presuppositions on the order of the concept; "I think therefore I am" refers only to implicit presuppositions on the order of feeling, of inner feeling.

This is very, very odd, this... his interest, all the more so since modern linguistics rediscovers this distinction between explicit presuppositions and implicit presuppositions. They are Cartesian without knowing it; it's very, very odd. There is a linguist named [Oswald] Ducrot today who is creating an entire theory from the distinction between explicit presuppositions and implicit presuppositions. No matter. Look at the idiot: he is the man of implicit presuppositions. That's it, reason as a natural function, natural reason. You cannot think without knowing what it means to think, even confusedly. So, you don't have to explain yourself. Descartes said: I don't have to explain what it means "I think therefore I am"; everyone experiences it in himself, whereas what "reasonable animal" means, that's written in books, and the idiot is the opposite of the man of books. The man of natural reason is the opposite of the man of learned reason, such that the cogito will be the idiot's statement.

So, this topic of the Idiot is entirely grounded in a Christian, philosophical tradition which is the tradition of natural reason. So, by what means -- since it continued throughout the West; it does belong to Western tradition -- by what means does it emigrate to Russia to be pushed to the climax and to take on a new look, [Pause] a new look obviously favored by Russian orthodoxy, by Russian Christianity? So, there I have all kinds of links that I am missing about the comparison between the subject of the Russian idiot since the idiot is a truly fundamental figure of Russian literature, not only in Dostoyevsky. And there too, in a way, the character of Dostoyevsky, whom Dostoyevsky will call "the Idiot", he precisely is much more dramatic than Descartes's idiot, of course, his illness etc. But he retained something of that, the power of natural reason reduced to itself, so reduced to itself that [reason] is ill. And yet it retained some bolts of lightning. The prince, the idiot, he knows nothing. But he is the man of implicit presuppositions. He understands everything. This figure of the idiot continues to say: "I think therefore I am" at the very moment when he is rather mad, or distracted, or a bit enfeebled.

But Descartes already agreed to pass for someone feeble. What is it with these philosophers, wanting to play at being the moron? It's very odd as a business already. They oppose this philosophical feebleness to philosophy since Descartes opposed that to Aristotle. He says: "No, no, I am not the man of knowledge, I know nothing", etc. Socrates said it already: "I know nothing, I am the idiot and the utility idiot (*idiot de service*)". Why? What do they have in mind? Okay then, what does he want? I am starting over.



A second audio [clip](#) of this lecture, with English subtitles, from "[Philosophy Overdose](#)."

[Start of Second Audio Clip]

What does Socrates want when he says: "Ah, you know ... but yes, look carefully: there's only the wicked man that's unhappy." He poses a kind of paradox, the auto-suppression of evil. We have to see: if the wicked are unhappy, there is no more evil. But why would there be no evil or no longer any evil? "Evil is nothing"! What does that mean? There we are; that means: you think you're so clever. You talk about evil, but you can't think of evil. If philosophers meant that, that would be interesting. In the end, that would be interesting. You cannot think that. Why would a philosopher need to say that? You can't think of evil. And I'm going to show you that you can't think of evil. "Evil is nothing", that wouldn't mean that evil is nothing. That would mean evil is nothing from the point of view of thought. You cannot think it. It is a nothingness. Might as well try to think nothingness.

In Socrates's texts, or rather Plato's, the subject, "evil is nothing," traverses two levels, a grand objective level and a subjective level. Evil is nothing objectively; what does that mean? It means: all evil comes down to deprivation, and deprivation comes down to negation. So "evil is nothing" is a pure negation. Evil is not. In fact, there is no being of the negative. There is no being of the negative.

There, this is very simple. It is very simple and very difficult at the same time. This reduction, you understand, of evil or of contradiction, if you will, to deprivation and of deprivation to simple negation.

Let's suppose [that] he does that, he develops his thesis. And subjectively, evil is nothing; what does that mean? Subjectively, it means -- and here Socrates develops all his talent -- he says: "Well, yes, listen, I'm going to show you through dialogue." He brings in a wicked man. He says to him, "You want to kill, right?" The other said, "Yes, yes I want to kill. [Laughter] I want to kill everyone". "Ah", says Socrates, "Fine, you want to kill everyone. But why do you want to kill everyone?" Then the wicked man says: "Because it makes me happy. Like that, it makes me happy, Socrates, I want to. It makes me happy." "Ah, you want to. But pleasure, tell me, wicked man, is it good or is it bad?" Then the wicked man says: "Obviously it is good, it feels good." [Laughter] And Socrates says: "But you're contradicting yourself! You're contradicting yourself because what you want is not to kill everyone. Killing everyone is a means. What you want is your pleasure. It happens that your pleasure is to kill everyone, fine. But what you want is your pleasure. And you told me yourself, pleasure is good, so you want good. You're simply fooling yourself about the nature of good." [Laughter] So the wicked man says: "Socrates, nobody can talk with you!" [Laughter] See, it's extremely simple.

The wicked man, subjectively, is someone who is in error, and this is going to be very important for us, this expression, "the wicked man." Hence Socrates's expression: "No one is voluntarily wicked," which means, by definition, all will is will of a good. There are simply some who are in error about the nature of good, so they are not voluntarily wicked. They are seeking good. He says: "I am seeking 'my' good." But Socrates says: "You are right. You must seek your good. Obviously, it is your good. So, for you, it is murder, very good, but it's always good, your good. So, then, you can't be seeking evil." Then, the wicked man goes mad. Socrates hopes that, in this way, he will himself be destroyed, but in the end, that only works at a certain level.

So, you see? What do I already understand about this? It's that this philosophy tells us: evil is nothing, which tells us this in two modes, on two registers: objectively, evil is pure negation, there is no being of the negative; and which tells us subjectively: you will not be able to want evil because it is contradictory. You can only want something good. No one is willfully



wicked. What are they doing? What are these philosophers already slogging through? No, not slogging. They already entered into what element? They're in the element of judgment.

In fact, the wicked man is the one who judges badly. The whole philosophy will be brought into the system of judgment, and perhaps that's what philosophy first invented, even if it's going to be ruinous, catastrophic, I don't know here. I am making no value judgment. I believe that philosophy was born with a system of judgment. And the wicked man is the one who judges badly. And the philosopher may be a fool, but he is good because he claims to judge well.

Let's suppose -- I'm still far from being able to say what I would like to have you feel; it takes so many words to come up with a tiny little feeling -- fine, what does it mean that philosophy would be and would merge with the constitution of a system of judgment? Perhaps it was for better or for worse. Perhaps that's what certain philosophers then tried to shake off and to escape, philosophy as a system of judgment, a judgment without sanction. Philosophy has never hurt anyone, but it is true that philosophers have not stopped judging. What is it that authorized them? No doubt by the fact that they were the ones who invented the system of judgment. They had made a system out of judgment. Why and how? What does that mean? There I tell you almost the substance because these are extremely simple things. But I am so unhappy, I am so dissatisfied with what is generally said about the origin of philosophy, and including the Hellenists, Heideggerians, etc., that I am trying to work this out on my own account.

Here's what I would like to say: it seems to me that philosophy has always started by taking a very curious form that it will never abandon, namely, the paradox, the paradox. The philosopher is a guy who arrives and, in a sense, he's a good for nothing; it's true. It's... Imagine, in the Greek city, the philosopher: he walks onto the public square; he is always ready, he is always ready to chat. "Ah well, where are you going?", it's Socrates who begins: "where are you going?" "What is happening to you?" And then the conversation begins. But it is not just any conversation: we will call the philosophical conversation one in which the paradox emerges that designates a certain power. A certain power or a certain impotence? And what is the paradox at the simplest level? Really, here I am saying rudimentary things; I am not wondering about what the paradox is. I'm looking for a little common thread.

And I believe that the paradox at the simplest level consists in saying to you: "there is something which 'is' and, at the same time, you cannot think it. Go work this out". X is, and yet, what a wonder, admire that: It is unthinkable. In technical terms, I would say: the paradox is a proposition that consists in posing the unthinkable of a be-ing [*étant*]. This would be a good definition of the paradox. That, the philosopher does not say; it is not. You have to be there; the commentators are really lamentable.

I'm choosing an example, an example apparently different from what I'm discussing, but it's the same thing. For example, there is a famous paradox from one of the first philosophers who called themselves philosophers. Moreover, he is considered to be the inventor of dialectics, it is Zenon. There are two Zenons: there is Zenon the Stoic and Zenon of Elea. I'm talking about Zenon of Elea, disciple of Parmenides, the one who said: "Being is," so there we are, the founder of ontology. Zenon creates some famous paradoxes concerning movement, and he explains that Achilles, for example, can't catch the tortoise. He explains that the arrow cannot hit the target. In other words, Zenon is an idiot. That's what it is to be an idiot. So, he explains: the arrow cannot reach the target, cannot find the target, nor can Achilles catch the tortoise. You recall how he explains it: he divides Achilles's path or the arrow's arc in half. The second half, he divides it in half, etc., etc., infinitely, and there will always be a distance, however small it may be, between the arrow and the target. Similarly, Achilles jumps forth,



and he covers half of his difference with the tortoise; he will have to cover half of what is left, half the rest of the rest, endlessly: he'll never catch up with the tortoise.

You will tell me, ah fine, but Zenon has a strong Greek mathematical background. It's very interesting. This is very interesting because it involves what the Greeks had set up as a method of exhaustion, that is, the analysis of the infinitely small. It's less nonsense than it would seem, but in what way is this philosophy? You understand, Zenon is no idiot, nor Socrates. He's an idiot in another way, but not in the way you would think because he knows things move. He certainly knows that Achilles catches the tortoise. He certainly knows that the arrow hits the target. He knows all that. Likewise, Socrates knows that there are wicked people.

So, what they want to tell us is something quite different: evil or movement are be-ings (*étants*). Only the problem is how to think about be-ing. What Zenon is trying to show is that movement as movement is unthinkable. It's not that the movement as a movement "is not" as many commentators have him say. That's foolish. It is that movement as movement cannot be thought. What Socrates wants to show is that evil as evil cannot be thought. Well, here it's getting more interesting; that's what a paradox is. A paradox states the unthinkable of a be-ing.

But why does that give them intense pleasure, these paradoxes? They are delighted. Moreover, they were told: "But you are stupid to say that: the movement does not exist! What do you mean?". They reply: "Ah well, whatever. How are getting along with my paradox?" Hence, the reputation that philosophers have always had for being talkative. They are not talkative; they are the quietest men in the world since they think that ultimately be-ing is fundamentally unthinkable. That can be comforting because if be-ing is unthinkable, perhaps it may not be that Being is thinkable, but that thinking of Being isn't easy either. And that would be philosophy, then. But no matter, there we are. Why are they saying that? Why are they so happy? At first glance, it is not a triumph for thought, it is not a victory for thought, far from that. It cannot think movement, it cannot think evil, it cannot think anything.

What can thought think then? It will think "Being is": Parmenides. Only justice is just. Righteous men are only righteous, second; what is truly and totally just is justice. Justice is just. We can create litanies: Virtue is virtuous, wisdom is wise. This is what Socrates does in a series of dazzling dialogues, but that infuriate everyone. A lengthy discussion occurs in order to come to the revelation: justice is just, and there is only justice that is just. There is only the being that "is". We'd like to say: "but it really didn't require 40 pages on that." But yes, it did, on the contrary; 40 pages were needed since, and this is inseparable: be-ing is unthinkable.

What is thinkable? Pure ideality, the idea, the idea. But in the end, it's so brilliant. Why do philosophers rejoice? The less they can think of be-ing, the happier they are, the more they laugh in their own way. They annoy everyone, all that, and then they explain that you can't think anything, you can't think movement, you can't think Being, no, you can't think evil, you can't think becoming, we can't think everything that is the object of paradox. And they proceed to say: yes, we can think: "justice is just, being is", etc. What are they doing? Understand! They are really fulfilling the destiny of philosophy, it seems to me, in its original emergence, namely, to constitute a system of judgment. It's about judging everything that is.

And what is the possibility of judging all that is? Ultimately, it is to rise to the position of something which is beyond Being. We will judge what is, and we will judge Being itself as a function of something which is above Being. We fall back on the One above Being. In other words, the basic idea of this whole philosophy is that Good alone, with a capital G - and this is how it produces this optimistic appearance - only Good creates Being and makes acting. Only Good makes one be objectively and makes one act subjectively. So Good is above Being. Good is One. Henceforth, we can judge all that is. It was less about decreeing movement,



becoming unthinkable, than of submitting it to the system of judgment as a function of criteria which do not become, which are the criteria of Good, which are not in motion, etc. So Good is both reason for being (*raison d'être*) and reason to act. In Latin, it will become Good *ratio essendi* and *ratio agendi*. Evil is necessarily nothing. And that's what they mean: Evil is necessarily nothing since only the Good creates Being and creates acting. Good is above Being. This is the condition of the judgment system.

So, in the end, if you will, this is not in the name of stupid optimism. This is in the name of logic, of a logos taken to the extreme. The power of paradox is the logos. It's not the philosopher who is optimistic; it's logic that is. [Logic] cannot think of Evil; it cannot think of movement; it cannot think of becoming. It is much later, much later, much later that logic will make a considerable movement over itself in order to try to think evil, being, and movement. . . Euh, no, to think evil, movement and becoming. And the reconciliation of evil, movement and becoming with logic and with the power of logic will mark a turning point for philosophy. -- [Interruption, noise from outside the class] Someone better close that door. . . . What did I do with my watch? What time is it? [Answers from students] Quarter past twelve. --

That will mark a very important date. Overall, we can say that the reconciliation of logic with be-ing as such, with evil, becoming, movement, what will this be? This will be high German Romanticism. This will be Hegel. At that point, logic will find a way to bring a being into accord with the negative. There is a being of the negative. It will be the reconciliation of logic, if you will, and of the tragic. Up until then, logic had been incurably optimistic and in the service of good.

[End of Second Audio Clip]

So fine, here's what I would like to say, and I would like to finish quickly because you have had enough, but I don't know what. . . Ah, yes, right. . .

Finally, here's what I mean: well yes, I seemed to have given up on Spinoza completely. Now is the time or never to come back to this. I'm going to ask you, how does he fit into all this? I seem to be creating a history of philosophy that goes off in all directions. And it's very odd because Spinoza keeps telling us, like everyone else at the time, evil is nothing. He doesn't stop. He constantly tells us evil is nothing, objectively and subjectively: objectively because the opposition comes down to deprivation, and deprivation comes down to negation. There is no being of the negative; subjectively because the wicked man is a mistake; wickedness is a mistake. The wicked man is someone who is in error. So, he keeps telling us that.

Moreover, he treats for own account the problem of evil in an enthralling text that I spoke of last time, namely his exchange of letters with Blyenberg and which relates only to the question of the evil. And yet, if you will then, on the first reading, one says: Yes, he is saying what we'd already been told for centuries before Socrates, what many others have said: this is the system of judgment; it's this logic that refuses, that cannot think of evil. This is the famous paradox of logos. And then, when we read at the same time, when we read, we have a completely different impression at the same time. -- [Noises from outside] They really are infuriating! (*chiantis*) -- One has a completely different impression. It's because, in words that have been said a thousand times, Spinoza tells us something completely different, entirely different. What is he telling us?

This is what he tells us: evil is nothing! And so far, that works very well. Until then, it can be endorsed, it's like in petitions, you know? You can sign the first sentence, and then comes the second sentence, and so there, I can no longer sign, no, no, no, that's just not right. Well, it's the same thing in the story that I'm telling you. Evil is nothing, who does that refer to? If we run a contest, then we answer: Who can say that? Socrates! Descartes! Leibniz! Spinoza! Fine, from there, the sentence branches off. Is evil nothing? This is a proposition that is not yet complete. If you are told evil is nothing, you must above all be careful; you wait, you wait



- the sentence hasn't ended. As it is, it's without sense since evil can be nothing for the most opposite of reasons.

You require some directional arrows, and some people follow the first fork: evil is nothing because only Good "creates Being" and "creates acting". That's the road: Good, that is the One above Being. Good creates Being, that is, Being derives from Good; the One is more than Being. – [Interruption; someone leaves the room] You're coming back, right? [Answer: Yes] – This is because evil is nothing, because only Good "creates Being" and reason for being (*raison d'être*) and reason for acting (*raison d'agir*). This is also signed Plato; it's signed Leibniz who, moreover, completely renews the expression: "Good creates Being and creates acting". He gives a very, very curious, and very, beautiful interpretation, but finally, it is completely within this first bifurcation.

And then, there are a certain number of the philosophers who say: "Of course, evil is nothing." See, I am not creating limits because there are also those who say: "Yes, evil is something." There is a being of the negative. So, there's a lot of variety. But I'm interested in the second fork, a race of strange philosophers telling us what? They tell us: "Yes, yes, fine, evil is nothing." They add very quickly, so as not to be overheard too much, they add: "because neither does good." [Laughter] In other words, evil is nothing, of course, since there is neither good nor evil. This draws reactions (*ça rebondit*). What do they mean? These are complete madmen. There's neither good nor evil? So what, murdering people, let's go right ahead! Anything at all! There's no good nor evil. It's equality of being, yes? Okay, fine! It's equality of being. Can we do anything at all? Well no, they say, you can't do just anything. We answer them: "Shut up, it's comes down to the same thing." No, it doesn't come down to the same thing; these are not the same things that I am going to defend and that the others are going to defend. They are not the same things. And then it becomes more interesting. But to defend why? What does that mean, to defend? It is a system of judgment. Ah, fine, I said one word too many. It's not "to defend" that one must say. So, what is it? Aaahh, we shall see, it's a completely different word.

Evil is nothing that doesn't mean either good or evil. So, Spinoza uses -- he's very sneaky Spinoza, you see it in his philosophical loyalty, in his greatness; he speaks like everyone else to say something completely different -- evil is nothing, yes, but I am the man who announces to you that there is neither good nor evil, and this why evil is nothing. And there again, long afterwards, long afterwards, it will be taken up, this will be taken up by someone who titles one of his main books: *Beyond Good and Evil*. And the writer who titled this main book *Beyond Good and Evil* is so misunderstood, like Spinoza, that he feels the need to write another main book titled *The Genealogy of Morals*, in which he shows that morality is, he says, something vile, but that, but that, but that, but his previous book was still misunderstood, *Beyond Good and Evil*. And he proposes this expression that, I swear to you, could literally be signed by Spinoza, that corresponds to the letter of "Spinozism" which is: beyond good and evil, understand, that there's neither good nor evil, that there is no more good than there is evil, at least that does not mean beyond the good and the bad. At least that doesn't mean beyond the good and the bad. It means: okay, there is neither good nor evil, but there is some good and some bad. It would be better if we're saying that; still, grant me the minimum of confidence: maybe it's a huge difference.

In ethics, there's neither good nor evil; there is some good and some bad. This is exactly the link between ethics and ontology. It has neither good nor evil; that means the Good is not superior to Being. There is only Being, there is only Being. Good and evil are meaningless words. [Pause] There is no less of good and of bad whereas morality is the art of good and evil and of their distinction or of their opposition and of the triumph of one over the other. Ethics



is the art of the good and of the bad and of their distinction insofar as the distinction does not overlap with that of good and evil.

So, ethics is directly connected to ontology. Moreover, I would say that [ethics] accompanies it constantly, but [ethics] is its necessary starting point, this beginning that resulted in us not being immediately able to settle into Being. This means that only the unraveling of the good and the bad can transport us to Being with the greatest speed. Ethics is the speed that transports us as quickly as possible to ontology, that is, to life within Being, hence the importance of the problem. Fine. So, what we must emphasize is the good and the bad as an introduction to ontology, namely: what is the ethical difference between the good and the bad as distinguished from the moral difference between good and evil?

There this seems very simple to me, that is, I'd just like to finish this point, just propose this point, and postpone its continuation because I have to go to vote. I'd just like to propose the analysis, I'd say, so that you might think about it; all of you, think about it. I'd like to indicate what direction I want to develop now. For me, there are two differences. There are two basic differences between morality and ethics, that is, between the art of the good and the bad and the discipline of good and evil.

I believe that good and bad imply two things which are not at all, which are even unintelligible for morality. The good and the bad imply, first of all, the idea that there is a quantitative distinction between be-ings, that is, the existants. The good and the bad is the idea of a quantitative distinction between be-ings, between existants, which amounts to the same, quantitative, but what quantity, what bizarre quantity? Ethics is fundamentally quantitative. And my second idea, but it's the same, is that the good and the bad designate an opposition between, a qualitative opposition between modes of existence. See, quantitative distinction between be-ings, qualitative opposition between modes of existence. What does that mean?

From the ethical point of view, the wicked, I would say, what is it? In finishing this, I would just like to make you sense some very concrete things, not at all developed philosophically. We were told earlier, from the point of view of morality, the wicked man is someone who is in error, that is, who judges badly. He is in error about the nature of the good. He judges badly, he makes a false judgment. From an ethical point of view, I believe that the wicked, what is called the bad, is also about being false. But this is not at all the same conception of the false because in the previous case, the false was a determination of the judgment, and indeed, a judgment is false when it takes that which is not as being that which is. This table is not red, [but] I say: "the table is red", I take it for what it is not, or the reverse. There we have the false as a qualification of judgment, the false as a qualification of false judgment.

Isn't there another meaning of the word false? And in a sense, it's very complicated because all the meanings get mixed together. I say, for example: So, someone gives me a gold coin, and I say: look at the first meaning of the word false. False means what? The inadequacy of the thing and the idea in the judgment. I would say: a judgment is false when there is no adequacy of the idea of the thing, and in all philosophies of judgment, the false has very often been defined like this: the true is the adequacy of the idea of the thing, the false is the inadequacy of the idea of the thing.

I am saying, there is a whole different meaning of the word "false" which specifically no longer concerns judgment. Someone gives me a gold coin, and I touch it, I bite it like in the movies, I bite it, it bends, or else, I take my little bottle of acid, and I say, "this is false. This piece is false. It's counterfeit". You will tell me, this is related to the judgment. Of course, that means, this coin has such an appearance that it will arouse the judgment in me: "it is gold" when it is not. But what I just said just now, this is the way in which the judgment system interprets the falsity of the coin, because in order for the fake gold coin to yield a judgment



according to which it would be true, therefore for the false to signify here an adequacy of the object and the idea, there must have been a false precondition: it is in itself that the gold coin is false. It is not simply in relation to the judgment; it does not yield an erroneous judgment that because it is false in itself, it is false. False is no longer the qualification of a judgment over the thing; it is a manner of being of the thing.

I don't pretend to say anything philosophical; I am trying to say, really, what I am saying is about feeling. I say about someone, well this guy is wrong; he's not real (*du vrai*). It's odd; you will tell me that it is still judgmental. It's strange because this is a kind of judgment of preference (*jugement de goût*). I weigh the thing; I say: this is just not right! I sometimes have this impression when facing a lie. When faced with a lie, I feel that something is wrong with this. Think of the prodigious pages by Proust, the way he assesses a lie from Albertine, something that's rings falsely. It's strange, what did she just say? He doesn't even remember what she said. There is a tiny thing that makes him tell himself: "But she's telling me a lie; this is abominable. What is she saying?" He can't decide what it is.

So, we can always say [that] this is in the domain of judgment or prejudice. Sense that one might say, one might say: yes, a philosopher of judgment will bring it back to judgment, that is, to the relationship of idea and thing. But I am saying it's something else as well. It is in itself that the thing is true or false. True no longer designates, true and false no longer designate a relation to the idea of the thing, but true and false designate a manner of being of the thing, a manner of being of the thing in itself. It's completely different.

Why do we risk confusing the two, true and false as qualification of judgment over the thing and the true and the false as qualification of the manner of being of the thing? We necessarily risk confusing them. I would say that the second sense of true and false is the deepest sense, it seems to me. True and false as a manner of being of the thing, the manner of the thing is in being. It can be really (*vraiment*) or falsely. It's the ethics here that interests us, being true to Being. This is not for judging what's true. It's really a mode of existence, being true to Being. [It's] very complicated. Or being false to Being.

I would say that there we have the meaning of true and false: it means authentic and inauthentic. The authentic comes from a complicated Greek word. It is really one who holds himself so as to be truly in Being. Fine, in a way, I get this impression on occasion when faced with existences: they are not authentic. Once again, this doesn't mean having a personality; it's a manner of being authentic and inauthentic, for example, feeling that someone is forcing themselves. You will tell me [that] to feel is a judgment. No, we will try to say a little more than that. It's not a judgment; it's exactly like you are weighing a letter. You toss a coin in your hand: too light, too heavy, what? Maybe we are returning to the topic of speed and slowness. Hey, he spoke too quickly, he spoke too quickly. Surely he is lying. Or else, he draws it out; he is looking for what he wants to say. That's not right, that's not right, it's way too slow. It's not working today, it's just not working, he's not doing well. What is this assessment? It's like assessing the weight of things. That's not judging. That's not confronting the idea and the thing. It's weighing the thing in itself. What is this?

I would say [that] this is something that's the opposite of the judgment system. It's like a world of tests (*épreuves*). A test what? Let's return to the model of the body, "how amazing the body is". These tests are physical-chemical. And you don't test someone; rather, it's someone who keeps undergoing the test. He lacks his speed; he lacks slownesses. He's inauthentic. On the contrary, you know, the days when everything is awful for us, from the moment we get up, we bump into things, we collide, we fall down, we slip and slide, we get yelled at everywhere. So, you get more and more mean yourself. [Laughter throughout this description] We are always in discord. These days, being in discord is a manner of being of doom; nothing works. It started in the morning, oh la la, when is this going to end? What a day! These are the



days of the inauthentic. Every time I go too fast, I collide; every time I go slow, I slide. There is nothing to be done. Better go back to bed, but when I go back to bed, I don't know what's going on. Even there it's awful. Nothing is going right. It's the long complaint, the long complaint of the inauthentic. Oh la la, I'm unhappy. Nothing's going right, fine. Like the gold coin, you stick some acid on it. Ah, this is the test! This is not a judgment, it's a test. What can the gold coin do? We don't know what "the body can do". What can the gold coin do, the one I just received? It endures testing with acid; if it's authentic gold, it endures it.

See, the physical-chemical test is opposed to moral judgment. And I would say you recognize, yes – in the end, we have to call those who think in this way immoralists -- they make a distinction between authentic and inauthentic. That does not at all obscure the distinction between good and evil. It's a completely different distinction. It's very different. And how do you recognize them, these authors? [*End of the recording*]⁷

⁷ Note: For archival purposes, the French transcript originates in documents available at Web Deleuze, reviewed and revised based on the BNF recording made available by Hidenobu Suzuki, and translated here for the first time in January 2020 for posting on this site.